

Montana Green Schools Challenge

In 2012, Bigfork High School formed a Gardening Club (eight members). We designed and built a school garden consisting of ten raised beds for all Bigfork schools (elementary, middle and high school). For the 2013-2014 school year (increased to thirteen members), we decided to focus on food issues and waste reduction that included multiple projects.

FOOD ISSUES and FOOD WASTE



Eight of our Gardening Club members attended the Growing Leaders Youth Summit in October, where we learned about composting, school gardens, food systems and food justice. One Gardening Club member presented a workshop at the Summit called, “The Apple of the Earth: The Importance of Soil, Water and Composting”. She gave a similar lesson at the elementary school for grades first through fourth. Through the classroom, ~223 students were more aware of the importance of composting and reducing waste through these lessons.

For one member’s senior project, a composting system was built and implemented to benefit the entire school. She chose compost because of the powerful impact the Youth Summit had on her; she desired to make our school more environmentally conscious. She began the process by measuring the amount of food traditionally disposed of in one week during third through fifth grade lunch. The total was outstanding; nearly 10 gallons of compostable food was collected. Because of the great need to reduce our amount of waste, the compost will be maintained yearly by the Gardening Club.

On October 24, 2013, Bigfork High School participated in Montana Crunch Time. At 2:00 PM, we all crunched into a locally grown apple. Our club also organized a Harvest Fest to promote our school garden. All elementary, middle and high school students and their families were invited. We bobbed for apples and made fresh cider out of local apples (plus face painting and scarecrow building). Our goal was to encourage healthy eating and support Farm to School and Buy Local initiatives throughout the state. We plan for this to be an annual event.

In an effort to improve our school and community through food and spread knowledge that we attained at the Youth Summit, we planned a Movie Night. We presented the film, *King Corn*, to build awareness about our nation’s food system. We served home-made pizza and invited the community to join us. 11 students, 3 staff and 4 community members attended.

We also formed a School Garden Committee to aid us in taking care of our school garden. Our first meeting was March 5th. 8 teachers, 6 students and 6 community members attended.

ENERGY WASTE

Our club planned a “Turn Off the Lights Day” December 20th with the following message: The U.S. alone consumes one fourth of the world’s energy. In an effort to spread awareness for the need to conserve energy, we are asking faculty and staff to turn off the lights. Computers and other electronic devices can be used but we would appreciate your support by turning lights off whenever possible. This gave the 25 teachers an opportunity to educate our high school students more about energy waste in the classroom.

ELECTRONIC WASTE

Our club is currently organizing a cell phone and other electronic device drive. Unused electronic devices will be collected and recycled. This event will be open to the entire community for an even greater amount of recyclables.

Bigfork High School Gardening Club